

AN ESSEX COUNTY ORNITHOLOGIST.<sup>1</sup>

BY GLOVER M. ALLEN.

IN 1905 the Nuttall Ornithological Club published as No. 3 of its *Memoirs*, Dr. Charles W. Townsend's 'Birds of Essex County,' the most extensive monograph that had up to that time appeared on the birds of so limited an area of North America. The large number (319) of species which it includes, bears witness not only to the many observers whose notes were available but also to the variety of conditions obtaining in this favored portion of Massachusetts whereby so great a multitude of birds is attracted. Certain species (as the Orchard Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, Long-billed Marsh Wren) whose habitat lies chiefly to the south are here at about their northeastern breeding limit, while others, characteristic of more boreal conditions (as Solitary Vireo, Hermit Thrush), find local spots suited to their needs.

The present paper is a further contribution of notes on Essex County birds, gleaned from the records and collections of the late Benjamin F. Damsell, of Amesbury, in the northernmost part of the County. Although a life-long student of birds, he was practically unknown among ornithologists for he published nothing and carried on his studies by himself in a quiet way. At his death, his collections and his note books covering nearly thirty years of continuous observation in the vicinity of his home, passed into the hands of his nephew, Mr. Howard D. Kenyon, of Sharon, Mass., through whose kindness I have been permitted to examine them. Many of the notes are of much local interest and it has seemed worth while to place on permanent record such of these as add to what has been published in the 'Birds of Essex County,' that his labors be not altogether lost. Of Mr. Damsell's life, Mr. Kenyon has most kindly written the following brief sketch.

"Benjamin F. Damsell was born Sept. 6, 1854, in Amesbury, Mass., the son of Thomas and Jane Damsell. He was educated in the public schools of Amesbury and early showed a taste for

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Nuttall Ornithological Club, May 6, 1912.

drawing. His sketches of birds and mammals gave indication that the boy was a good observer with unusual artistic ability. His father was a taxidermist on a small scale and from him Benjamin gained his inspiration for collecting and mounting specimens. His first attempt to stuff a bird seems to have been at the age of twelve years.

"Both parents died in 1866, the home was broken up, and the boy went to a farm to live. Here among the hills where Massachusetts joins New Hampshire, Mr. Damsell started his collection and began the study of ornithology. Among his first books on the general subject of bird-lore was Cassell's 'Book of Birds.' While at the farm his outings took the form of tramps through the woods, for the purpose of studying the birds and adding to his collection. His early advantages were few, but his natural ability, his love for the subject, and his determination to do good work knew no obstacles. In his early days in taxidermy, he bought stuffed specimens and took them apart to study the methods of those who were considered expert. While yet a farmer's boy his pencil sketches of birds and squirrels were replaced by successful efforts at oil painting.

"Tiring of the limitations of farm life he learned the carriage builder's trade. In 1881 he married Miss Emma F. Day, of Amesbury, and continued to reside in his native town.

"For years he reserved Saturdays for hunting trips. Oftentimes when business was dull a large portion of his time was given to taxidermy and painting. All his work seemed to combine the skill of the mechanic with the touch of the artist. He bought the best books, studied the best methods, with the result that his knowledge of birds was comprehensive and exact.

"Most of his hunting was done in the vicinity of Amesbury and on the great meadows of Salisbury and of Hampton, N. H. For forty years he continued to study, collect, and mount specimens. His collection was reasonably complete in those birds that frequent northeastern Massachusetts and his notes were kept until within a few weeks of his death. He was well known as a taxidermist in the nearby towns of Newburyport, Haverhill, Hampton, and Exeter.

"After an illness of several months he passed away June 8, 1911.

His attainments were such that had he not chosen to live the quiet, retired life of his native hills, he would have won distinction in the artistic and mechanical side of taxidermy. By those who knew him he will ever be remembered as a man of unusually lovable qualities and nobility of character."

The notebooks, from which the following items are abstracted, cover the period from 1880 to 1911, and though at first confined to records of birds shot, became later more systematic, with entries of all dates on which the different species were seen or killed. Beyond this there is rarely more than an occasional remark concerning some unusual circumstance, except for dates when birds were seen mating or when eggs were found. In addition to the notes on birds, several pages in some years are given to lists of local trees with dates on which they first bloomed or put out their leaves, when the first thunder shower occurred, the first frogs were heard, and the like. The bird records seem to be made with much caution and as they are frequently substantiated by the actual specimen, may in most cases be deemed wholly trustworthy. Part of the collection was destroyed but the remainder is in good condition and consists of several hundred mounted specimens, some of the more interesting of which have been acquired by the Boston Society of Natural History for its New England collection.

In the paragraphs which follow, it is to be understood that unless definitely mentioned, the locality is Amesbury, Mass., or the immediate vicinity

1. ***Uria lomvia lomvia***. BRÜNNICH'S MURRE.—An unusually early date of appearance is November 9, 1901. Late November is the usual time for this bird on our coast. The first fall arrival is noted on November 24, 1890, and November 28, 1893.

2. ***Sterna hirundo***. COMMON TERN.—The increase in numbers of this species on our coast of late years due to the protection afforded the breeding birds is evidenced by the entries in the notebooks. Although rarely recorded in summer previous to 1906, yet after that date it regularly appears during late July and in August.

3. ***Oceanodroma leucorhoa***. LEACH'S PETREL.—On October 16, 1887, one was shot at Kimball's Pond, a large body of fresh water a short distance inland. It is a striking fact that the inland records for this bird in New England are mainly of specimens seen on ponds or rivers during the middle of October. Possibly these petrels are then in active migration south and at that time more frequently wander or are blown inland.

4. **Phalacrocorax carbo.** CORMORANT.— An interesting case is recorded of a Common Cormorant that was seen to be harassed by two Kingbirds at Amesbury on June 18, 1895. It sought refuge in an oak tree and fell to the ground where it was captured. An examination showed that one wing had been broken but had healed. The bird was a male.

5. **Phalacrocorax auritus auritus.** DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT.— A midsummer bird is noted as shot at Kingston, N. H., July 10, 1891.

6. **Pelecanus occidentalis.** BROWN PELICAN.— An immature bird, taken May 1, 1907, off Great Boar's Head, Hampton Beach, N. H., was mounted by Mr. Damsell, and later purchased by Col. John E. Thayer who presented it to the Society. It has not apparently been recorded.

7. **Anas platyrhynchos.** MALLARD.— Occasionally taken, in one instance a late male, on December 2, 1904. A pair shot at True's Pond, October 16, 1893, weighed — the drake  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pounds; the duck 2 pounds.

8. **Nettion carolinense.** GREEN-WINGED TEAL.— An early record is of one shot March 23, 1889. In 1898, one was killed on December 2.

9. **Querquedula discors.** BLUE-WINGED TEAL.— The only spring specimens noted are: one on March 21, 1898, and a male, April 24, 1897.

10. **Spatula clypeata.** SHOVELLER.— This unmistakable species is twice recorded, once in spring, April 6, 1893, and once in fall, September 3, 1894. Both dates extend those recorded for Essex County.

11. **Aix sponsa.** WOOD DUCK.— A late bird is noted on December 16, 1903.

12. **Marila americana.** REDHEAD.— A single specimen was taken October 14, 1893.

13. **Marila collaris.** RING-NECKED DUCK.— But one record is given for Essex County in Dr. Townsend's memoir. Mr. Damsell, however, has a record of a bird on April 7, 1889.

14. **Somateria dresseri.** AMERICAN EIDER.— The collection contains several specimens of this duck, and the notebooks record it once as early as September 20, 1903, an unusually forward bird.

15. **Somateria spectabilis.** KING EIDER.— The single record for Essex County is the specimen taken at Marblehead, November 24, 1889. It is therefore of interest to find that a second was shot at nearly the same time by Mr. Damsell, namely on November 29, 1889. It was a young male.

16. **Chen hyperboreus hyperboreus.** LESSER SNOW GOOSE.— A Snow Goose, shot October 7, 1888, is among the birds whose measurements are entered in one of the notebooks. The wing length is there recorded as  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches, which indicates the Lesser Snow Goose. In the notebook for 1902, is the entry: "Albert Shaw shot a Snow Goose," but the exact date, if known, was not recorded. A further entry records, February 18, 1902, "Saw a flock of Snow Geese."

17. **Anser albifrons gambeli.** WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.— Previous to 1905, there were no records of this bird for Essex County. Mr. Damsell

notes two, however, that were killed on the Salisbury marshes October 5, 1888.

18. *Ixobrychus exilis*. LEAST BITTERN.—Records for this elusive bird are few in the northeastern extreme of its range. Mr. Damsell's notebooks record it twice in fall: September 21, 1887, and September 1, 1888.

19. *Herodias egretta*. AMERICAN EGRET.—A 'white heron' shot September 19, 1887, is recorded, together with measurements of the bird. The wing, 16 inches, and tarsus, 6 inches, indicate that it was *H. egretta*. The notebooks also record another white heron at Salisbury, August 5, 1907.

20. *Rallus elegans*. KING RAIL.—A specimen is noted on August 14, 1902.

21. *Gallinula galeata*. FLORIDA GALLINULE.—Most of the few records for Essex County are of October birds. Mr. Damsell's collection contained two birds, one taken September 14, 1887, the other October 3, 1903.

22. *Lobipes lobatus*. NORTHERN PHALAROPE.—Data on the occurrence of these birds are always interesting. I find one spring record, May 18, 1904; and one of a bird 'in full plumage' (and so perhaps a care free female) on July 31, 1905, a rather early date.

23. *Recurvirostra americana*. AMERICAN AVOCET.—The collection contains a fine adult female of this species, taken May 23, 1887, doubtless on the Salisbury marshes. That it was a locally obtained specimen there can be no doubt, as it was skinned, sexed and measured by Mr. Damsell. His notebook simply makes record of it as the first of its kind observed, for in these earlier days of his collecting he seems not to have been aware of the rarity of his capture. The specimen has been acquired by the Boston Society of Natural History for its New England Collection. There are but three other instances on record of the appearance of this species in Massachusetts, one of which is indefinite and the others of fall birds. That this straggler should have appeared in spring is therefore of unusual interest.

24. *Philohela minor*. WOODCOCK.—The notebooks contain a number of records of late fall birds, as follows: November 20, 1886, December 10, 1887, November 21, 1880, November 18, December 6, 1890, November 30, 1893, December 5, 1903.

25. *Gallinago delicata*. WILSON'S SNIBE.—Dr. Townsend indicates that this bird is occasional in winter in Essex County. Mr. Damsell notes one November 24, 1896, at Amesbury; and records one shot at Newburyport on February 8, 1889.

26. *Micropalama himantopus*. STILT SANDPIPER.—The notebooks extend somewhat the limits of the fall migration of this species as recorded for Essex County, viz., July 22 to September 16. Thus I find entry of specimens shot September 15, and 17, 1893, and October 2, 1895.

27. ***Limosa fedoa***. MARBLED GODWIT.— This bird is now so rare as to be considered 'accidental' in Essex County. It is therefore worth noting that one was shot July 28, and another July 30, 1888.

28. ***Limosa hæmastica***. HUDSONIAN GODWIT.— 'Large flocks' are recorded September 7, 1891, and single birds shot August 24, 1889, August 31, and September 2, 1903.

29. ***Bartramia longicauda***. UPLAND PLOVER.— A very late bird is one shot by William Thompson on October 26, 1901. In 1896, there are records of this species at Amesbury on July 10, and in August, but in other years rarely more than once in the late summer.

30. ***Numenius americanus***. LONG-BILLED CURLEW.— There are two records for this bird in the notebooks, namely of specimens taken probably on the Salisbury marshes, July 21, 1887, and July 25, 1891. Although the Hudsonian Curlew is often mistaken for this species by gunners, I am confident that these records may stand.

31. ***Numenius hudsonicus***. HUDSONIAN CURLEW.— The notebooks contain frequent mention of this species among birds shot in August and early September. A flock of thirty was seen August 2, 1907.

32. ***Numenius borealis***. ESKIMO CURLEW.— A few additional records for this nearly or quite extinct species are: August 31, 1889, 'shot one in the marsh'; August 28, and 29, 1893, specimens shot. There are no records in the books of later date.

33. ***Charadrius dominicus dominicus***. GOLDEN PLOVER.— The only spring record is May 18, 1903, and may, I think, be accepted as the bird was thoroughly familiar to Mr. Damsell.

34. ***Oxyechus vociferus***. KILLDEER.— The memorable winter flight of these birds in 1888 was noticed at Amesbury, where on December 4, four were shot, and two the following day. In 1884, a bird was shot on the marsh in August, and in 1895 one is recorded November 25.

35. ***Colinus virginianus virginianus***. BOB-WHITE.— Essex County is close to the critical limit for this species in its northeastward range. In the notebooks, it is entered nearly every year among the birds seen about Amesbury, but after 1905, it appears no more.

36. ***Ectopistes migratorius***. PASSENGER PIGEON.— Mr. Damsell was quite familiar with this species and the Mourning Dove, and his collection contains specimens of both, locally obtained. Of the Pigeon, a male and a female were shot on August 24, 1886. In 1887, the species is entered twice, on April 23 and November 29. The year 1888 is the last year in which the Passenger Pigeon was observed, a flock of five on May 6. This was about the year when the bird practically disappeared from New England.

37. ***Zenaidura macroura carolinensis***. MOURNING DOVE.— One is recorded February 24, 1890, and another January 9, 1892; the extreme dates for this bird are, with these exceptions, March 31 to November 2, (1894).

38. **Buteo lineatus lineatus.** RED-SHOULDERED HAWK.—The occasional gathering of this species into large companies during migration, was noticed on September 18, 1886, when a 'flock of about 300' passed at Amesbury.

39. **Haliaeetus leucocephalus leucocephalus.** BALD EAGLE.—The notebooks contain several winter records for this bird, whose occasional appearance is always a matter of interest. In 1890, 'one dark and two white-headed birds' were seen March 1, and a single bird May 30. In 1891 there are records for February 7, July 15, August 3 and 11, December 20. In 1903, one was seen, January 5, at Hampton, N. H. These winter records are of interest as showing the bird's occasional presence on the coast during the winters, while inland among the mountains and lakes of New Hampshire they are summer visitors.

40. **Scotiaptex nebulosa nebulosa.** GREAT GRAY OWL.—An unrecorded specimen of this rare owl was in Mr. Damsell's collection, and has been acquired by the Boston Society of Natural History. It was shot January 6, 1894, in the Great Swamp at Amesbury.

41. **Cryptoglaux funerea richardsoni.** RICHARDSON'S OWL.—Two mounted specimens obtained in the vicinity of Amesbury are in the collection; the first was taken February 25, 1889, the second, a male, on January 5, 1903.

42. **Nyctea nyctea.** SNOWY OWL.—Although generally considered a very irregular winter visitor, it is worthy of note that it is almost yearly recorded in the notebooks. The years and dates are given in full in case they may have value in connection with the notices of flights recorded by Mr. Ruthven Deane. They are: 1886, November 26, December 10; 1887, February 10; 1889, November 8; 1890, January 23, February 13 (Hampton River, N. H.), November 28, December 6, 11, 20, 24; 1891, December 16; 1893, November 7; 1896, November 16, ♂; 1901, December 26, two, December 28; 1902, January 3, 11, 18, 25, February 3, 4, April 3, October 18, 23; 1903, March 12; 1905, November 21.

43. **Coccyzus americanus americanus.** YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO.—The Black-billed is the Cuckoo commonly represented in Essex County, while the Yellow-billed species more rarely reaches northern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. This is shown well by Mr. Damsell's records, in which the latter bird is entered but five times in seventeen years. In 1884, one was shot May 23, and a second on June 14. In 1901 a nest and eggs were found on June 24. A bird was taken August 24, 1903, and the final one noted May 17, 1906.

44. **Dryobates villosus villosus.** HAIRY WOODPECKER.—Although this bird breeds sporadically in Essex County and in general is considered a resident species wherever found, a tabulation of all the entries in the notebooks, covering twenty-six years, brings out very strongly the fact that on the coast in the vicinity of Amesbury, at all events, the Hairy Woodpecker appears very regularly during October and November in small

numbers, but only rarely in the winter and spring months. Thus out of the twenty years in which it is recorded, there are but two September entries; in eleven years it was noted in October and in five years not until November. During these two months there are sometimes as many as five or six records for each month. In four years there are from one to three December occurrences; one record each for January and February, two for early April, and one for May, all in different years. The last is of one seen May 30, 1890, a date that indicates perhaps a nesting bird. With us in central New England there is unquestionably a slight movement of these birds in late fall into woodlands from which they are absent in summer, but during the winter most of them seem to disappear again.

45. **Picoides arcticus.** ARCTIC THREE-TOED WOODPECKER.—The measurements of a bird taken November 24, 1883, are recorded in one of the notebooks. Another specimen is entered October 28, 1887, both no doubt from Amesbury. It is interesting that though both species of the Three-toed Woodpecker are found together in the White Mountains as residents, the Arctic is the more given to wandering, and is the one oftener noted in fall and winter outside of its summer range, while the American Three-toed Woodpecker much more rarely appears as a visitor south of its breeding range.

46. **Sphyrapicus varius varius.** YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.—Although a July and an August record for Essex County are given by Dr. Townsend, he does not adduce any evidence of its breeding. Mr. Damsell's notes contain several mentions of this woodpecker in May and June, as follows: a male May 5, 1887; a bird shot at 'the farm' May 4, 1889; one shot at True's Pond, May 6, 1893; one June 12, 1891; one May 18 and 21, 1907. Perhaps an occasional pair nests in the swampy woods of this region. A late bird is noted on November 4, 1890.

47. **Phlœotomus pileatus abieticola.** NORTHERN PILEATED WOODPECKER.—So rare is this bird in the eastern part of Massachusetts that the only specific mention of its occurrence in Essex County relates to one at Manchester in December, 1885. Two additional instances are supplied by Mr. Damsell's notes, namely, a young male shot July 8, 1886; and a bird shot by one Moses Tewksbury at Kimball's Pond, October 4, 1895. Both these were mounted, and the measurements of the former are entered in one of the notebooks. Probably these were wanderers from central Massachusetts or New Hampshire.

48. **Melanerpes erythrocephalus.** RED-HEADED WOODPECKER.—One was shot at East Salisbury, August 30, 1884.

49. **Antrostomus vociferus vociferus.** WHIP-POOR-WILL.—Mr. Damsell's notes extend slightly the extreme dates recorded for the presence of this bird in Essex County. In 1902 it was first noted April 28, and in 1891 a late bird is entered October 3.

50. **Chordeiles virginianus virginianus.** NIGHTHAWK.—On May 30, 1890, is the interesting note that Nighthawks were seen 'in flocks,' evidently late migrants bound still farther north.



51. *Chætura pelagica*. CHIMNEY SWIFT.— In 1898 Swifts remained unusually late and are entered almost daily till October 4.

52. *Empidonax trailli alnorum*. ALDER FLYCATCHER.— On June 8, 1890, a nest and four eggs were found near Amesbury; the bird is again recorded May 30, 1892, July 2, 1894, and May 25, 1901.

53. *Perisoreus canadensis canadensis*. CANADA JAY.— One was taken February 13, 1904, at Newton, New Hampshire, not far from the Massachusetts boundary.

54. *Sturnella magna magna*. MEADOWLARK.— The notes make but few records of the Meadowlark in January and February, namely February 10, 1894; January 15 and 25, 1902; February 23, 1910. Of late years it seems as if this bird was more regularly found in winter than before along the coastal marshes of the northeastern part of its range. Previous to 1905 Dr. Townsend had but a single January record for Essex County.

55. *Icterus spurius*. ORCHARD ORIOLE.— The breeding range of this bird extends in a narrow strip along the Essex County coast, and at Ipswich it has been found with some regularity. North of the Massachusetts line it has been rarely found as a straggler only. In Mr. Damsell's notes covering twenty-six years of observations at Amesbury it is entered three times, namely, July 4, 1883, one seen at Newburyport; May 12, 1891, and May 21, 1900, one noted at Amesbury.

56. *Icterus galbula*. BALTIMORE ORIOLE.— An interesting note records that on November 29, 1897, one was seen in Dover, N. H., 'with English Sparrows.'

57. *Quiscalus quiscula æneus*. BRONZED GRACKLE.— November 6, 1890, a 'large flock' was seen, a late date for such numbers. One was shot February 6, 1897, which may have been a wintering bird.

58. *Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus*. LAPLAND LONGSPUR.— Although prior to 1902 there were apparently no records of this bird in Massachusetts during winter, Mr. Damsell notes one shot January 10, 1885, probably on the seashore at Amesbury.

59. *Cardinalis cardinalis cardinalis*. CARDINAL.— On September 27, 1889, one was shot at True's Pond, Amesbury. It is interesting that Dr. Townsend records a pair at Amesbury on May 19, 1901.

60. *Piranga erythromelas*. SCARLET Tanager.— 'A male in full plumage,' August 26, 1897.

61. *Bombycilla cedrorum*. CEDAR WAXWING.— Usually the note-books do not record this species at Amesbury until May. There is commonly a well defined movement of Waxwings in southern or central New England during late January and February, when they appear with Robins, presumably from farther south. This early migration reaches southern New Hampshire, but apparently with considerable irregularity. At Amesbury, Mr. Damsell records two Cedar birds February 1, 1887, and a flock on February 19, the same year, but in other years this early flight is not mentioned. On September 10, 1889, old birds were seen still feeding their young.

62. **Vireo griseus griseus.** WHITE-EYED VIREO.—This vireo bred at least till lately in Essex County, but mainly in the more southern and eastern portions. Mr. Damsell records that on July 1, 1890, he shot one at Amesbury. Possibly a pair bred near there that year.

63. **Dendroica coronata.** MYRTLE WARBLER.—For how many years this bird has wintered to the north of Cape Ann, seems now beyond discovery. Mr. C. J. Maynard did not know of them in winter at Ipswich from 1868 to 1872, and the recent increase in the area of evergreen trees in that region may account for the numbers of wintering birds to be found there at the present day. At East Salisbury, Mr. Damsall shot one on January 23, 1884, and in several of the succeeding years he records it at Amesbury, namely, February 10, 1887, a flock of five or ten; December 17, 1887; December 28, 1891; December 30, 1893; February 10, 1894; January 1, 1901. These sporadic records do not seem to indicate that the Myrtle Warbler winters at Amesbury and vicinity with anything like the regularity that it does at such favored localities as Ipswich or at Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

64. **Dendroica fusca.** BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.—A rather early date of arrival is May 5, 1886, when two males are recorded.

65. **Oporornis agilis.** CONNECTICUT WARBLER.—Mr. Damsell's notes make mention of a specimen shot September 27, and another September 28, 1893, while a third was killed October 2 of the same year.

66. **Oporornis philadelphia.** MOURNING WARBLER.—There are two instances in the notes when this rare warbler was seen at Amesbury — May 30, 1888, and May 30, 1892. I saw a bird at Ipswich on June 3, 1912. These seem to be the only definite dates published for Essex County.

67. **Icteria virens virens.** YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.—One was shot at Amesbury on September 30, 1882 — of interest both on account of the late date and the locality. There is little probability that it had bred in the vicinity but may have wandered from the breeding stations in the southern part of the County.

68. **Anthus rubescens.** PIPIT.—The single spring note of this species in Mr. Damsell's books refers to one observed May 9, 1904. Dr. Townsend's spring records for the County are May 9, 1893, May 10, 1903, and June 8, 1878. The fall dates in the notebooks extend from September 10 (1887) to December 1 (1891.)

69. **Mimus polyglottos polyglottos.** MOCKINGBIRD.—Of late years, records for this bird in eastern New England have multiplied and should be gathered together to determine if this species is not becoming increasingly more common as a visitor and resident. That even a large part of the many recorded are escaped cage-birds seems unlikely. In Mr. Damsell's notes a Mockingbird is entered as seen at Amesbury, November 7, and again December 16, 1893, perhaps the same individual on both occasions.

70. **Regulus calendula calendula.** RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.—A late bird was shot at Amesbury, November 26, 1885.

71. *Hylocichla guttata pallasii*. HERMIT THRUSH.—The Hermit Thrush breeds regularly along the coast of New Hampshire in the white pine woods, but in Essex County it becomes local and less common as a summer resident. Thus Dr. Townsend records its breeding at Lynn, North Beverly, between Gloucester and Magnolia, and in Essex, Georgetown, and Boxford. Judging from Mr. Dainsell's notes it breeds with some regularity in the vicinity of Amesbury. Thus he found its nest and eggs on May 30, 1888, and again on June 1, 1894. In 1893 the bird is noted throughout May, and several times in June, July and August, 1898. A late bird was seen December 2, 1891.

72. *Sialia sialis sialis*. BLUEBIRD.—An early arrival was noted on February 16, 1902, and a male on the 27th of the same month.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO AVIAN PALEONTOLOGY.

BY R. W. SHUFELDT.

### I. THE STATUS OF EXTINCT MELEAGRIDÆ.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Plate III.*

UP to the present time, there have been but three species of fossil *Meleagridæ* described and recorded, and these are correctly listed — in so far as their names go — on page 388 of the third edition of the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds. Two of these, namely *M. antiqua* and *M. celer*, were described by Marsh,—the former being from the Oligocene (White River) of Oregon [?], and the latter from the Pleistocene of New Jersey.

It may be of interest, but surely of no importance, that Marsh also described other fossil remains of a bird as *M. altus* from the "Post-pliocene" of New Jersey, which has since been discovered to be but a synonym of *Meleagris superba* of Cope.

*M. superba* is the third species listed in the A. O. U. Check-List, and is said to have come from the Pleistocene of New Jersey. On

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<sup>1</sup> *The Illustrated Outdoor World and Recreation of New York City* will soon publish in serial form a "History of the North American Turkeys" by E. A. Mellhenny, to appear as a book later on. The present article forms, in part, one of the chapters on Prehistoric Turkeys.